



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## TWO AMERICAN MANTEL-PIECES

AN unusual combination of interests centers in the pair of American mantel-pieces, the gift of Francis P. Garvan, which are shown in the Room of Recent Accessions for February. Made within a few years after the close of the War of 1812, when a feeling of sober pride in its outcome was shared by all patriotic Americans, these mantels reflect the desire of their makers to perpetuate the memories of its victories and its sacrifices, and in their graceful solution of this problem may hold a suggestion of value for modern designers in the decorative arts.

The mantels, similar in general design, observe roughly the divisions of the classic orders and confess their descent from the work of the Adam brothers, who first introduced a similar use of composition ornament into England—composition of plaster, resin, and size, squeezed in moulds of earthenware or carved boxwood and applied to wooden structures by means of some adhesive or the use of small brads. A variety of composition designs is presented in these mantels, the only use of identical squeezes occurring on the edge of the mantel shelf where the small drapery motif is sunk between beaded edges. The moulded work in wood is cut to the same profiles in both mantels, although combined with slight changes of relation to suit the general design.

The more elaborate mantel<sup>1</sup> has an exuberant air in keeping with the subject which occupies its central panel—the victorious battle of Lake Erie. On the tenth of September, 1814, Commodore Perry was able to send to the Secretary of the Navy a memorable letter in which he said, "The British squadron, consisting of two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop have this moment surrendered to the force under my command, after a sharp conflict." The enthusiasm created by this victory, whose virtual effect was the gain of the Northwest to the territory of the United States at the treaty of Ghent, swept over the country, and Commodore

Perry, raised to the rank of Captain, was awarded a gold medal by vote of Congress, and the valor of his officers and men given proper acknowledgment.

This scene, cleverly treated in low relief, is enframed with an elaborate and delicate treatment of scrolls and flowers and is set in a beaded panel. The spaces to right and left of the panel are filled with garlands of roses and daisies and small baskets of flowers, while on the extreme ends of the mantel are hanging lamps of pseudo-classic design. The frieze breaks out over the grouped columns and its surface is treated with a round-headed beaded panel with female figures of Wedgwood inspiration. The supporting members are composed of groups of three colonnettes with acanthus capitals and fluted shafts set upon bases raised on small balls. At either side of these groups are drops of acorns and oak leaves pendent from rosettes.

The second mantel<sup>1</sup> is of slightly more restrained design. The simple Tuscan colonnettes are conventional in their elements, the drapery motif is omitted from the architrave member, and the vases of flowers in the round-headed beaded panels at the ends of the frieze are impersonal in character. This greater restraint is explained by the subject of the central panel, a memorial sarcophagus upon which is inscribed: To the Memory of Departed Heroes. This sarcophagus was originally surmounted by a spread-eagle grasping a swag of bay in its claws, whose silhouette is still distinct. Weeping willows with doves of peace perched in the branches flank this central composition, a variation upon the familiar treatment of the tombs of Washington and Franklin.

Both mantels are undoubtedly from the hands of the same maker, and the presence of an inscription, R. Wellford, Philadelphia, Delit., on the lower part of the sarcophagus adds a particular interest as to their origin. "Robert Wellford, ornamental composition manufacturer," appears first in the Philadelphia Directory for 1801, and from then until 1839 he resided in the city. His address changes from time to time, and his prosperity seems

<sup>1</sup>Acc. No. 18.119.2.

<sup>1</sup>Acc. No. 18.119.1.

to have increased with the growth of his business, which in 1807 he calls the "original American composition ornament manufactory, 96 S. 8th St. 5th door below Walnut." In 1811 we find him purchasing property from one Edwd. Burd, about which time he must have moved his business to 145 S. 10th St., at which address he was located until 1835 or 1836. In 1818 he was one of the many owners of the Olympia Theatre, while the last deed yet found on record on which his name appears is dated April 21, 1837. This is an assignment to him by John King, a gold-leaf manufacturer, to cover a debt. Neither he nor his wife appears to have left a will or administration in Philadelphia; after 1839 he disappears absolutely from the records where one might expect to find him. In 1839 he is listed as "Robert Wellford, gentleman, 12 Perry," at which time he must have retired from business and shortly after moved elsewhere, as he seems to have died away from the city.

This discovery of the name of an American manufacturer of composition ornament is of considerable interest; for undoubtedly he sent his products to cabinet-makers throughout the eastern seaboard, and the attribution of particular work to certain artisans on the basis of composition ornament is at once proved untrustworthy. The question whether he also made the mantels, or only the ornament, is not decided. There are in the Museum two doorways from Philadelphia which have some of the drapery ornament from a mould identical with that on the mantelpieces. The probability is that he furnished only the composition ornament, which was applied by individual joiners to suit their own fancy.

In July, 1814, when the Secretary of the Navy wrote to his agent in Philadelphia to order the swords and medals made for presentation to the victorious officers of the battle of Lake Erie, he suggested a representation of the engagement as the best subject for one side of the medal, and stated that the most desirable engraving of the subject was to be found in the Academy of Arts in Philadelphia. It is not improbable that our mantel ornament and the Perry

medal were done at about the same time and inspired by the same engraving.

The use of the American eagle as a decorative element at the time when these mantels were made was very popular in all parts of the then United States, principally as a motif for interior use. Carved in wood or cast in plaster or composition, it is also found upon furniture and furniture brasses. Asher Benjamin suggests its use upon a mantelpiece in his *American Builders' Companion*, 1817, and it has been very delightfully used in Goshen, Connecticut, over the corners of a doorway.

C. O. C.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS OF COMPARATIVE CLASSICAL MATERIAL

WITH the opening of the new classical wing in December, 1917, began a new era for the Classical Department. For the first time in its history the collection could be displayed in a manner worthy of its merits, so that in its new spacious and well-lit quarters the visitor can now properly study and enjoy each object. To increase still further the educational value of our collections, it has now been planned to place in each gallery a case of explanatory photographs. The material illustrated in these photographs will be manifold: for instance, stylistically related objects in other museums or private collections; better preserved replicas of our fragmentary statues, to show the missing parts; Greek vase paintings depicting the uses of the various shapes of Greek vases, bronze strigils and other implements; the different types of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman tombs in which many of our objects have been found; scenes exemplifying ancient technical processes; maps illustrative of contemporary history; and so forth. In short, the scheme is to supply the public with the archaeological background which will give them a greater understanding and appreciation of our collections.

The case containing such "illustrative material" for the large Hall of Sculpture was the first to be completed and has now been placed on exhibition. The photographs are mounted on cardboards, ar-